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A PROFILE OF LOW-WAGE WORKERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Research and Planning Branch
British Columbia Ministry of Labour
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Introduction

This study details the results of a survey conducted by the Research and Planning Branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Labour at Canada Manpower Offices across the province. The survey was carried out during the second half of 1975, and involved the collection of data on a wide range of personal and labour market characteristics of low-wage registrants at each Centre.

Preliminary survey results were published in an article in the Departmental Labour Research Bulletin which appeared in February 1976. In addition to outlining the major findings of the survey, the article also compared some of the B.C. data with the results of low-wage studies which have been undertaken in three other provinces.[1] This indicated a considerable degree of similarity with respect to the characteristics of low-wage employment across the country, although striking differences were evident in a few areas, e.g. industrial distribution, levels of educational attainment. The article also referred to the principal economic theories put forward to explain the causes and persisting incidence of low-wage employment.

The present report deals primarily with an in-depth analysis of the B.C. low-wage data without

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1. R. H. Hird, Characteristics of Low-Wage Workers in Ontario, Ontario Ministry of Labour, September 1974; J. G. Boutin, Enquête sur les caractéristiques socio-économiques des travailleurs rémunérés autour du salaire minimum, Quebec Ministry of Social Affairs, 1976; Survey of Characteristics of Low-Wage Earners in Alberta, Research Branch, Alberta Ministry of Labour and Manpower, August 1974.

further discussion of the foregoing aspects. Survey results are examined both from an overall provincial standpoint, as well as on a cross-sectional basis where this provides additional insight on differing regional conditions in low-wage labour markets.[1] In some cases, survey results are contrasted with comparable tabulations drawn from the 1971 Census and from the Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Canada. Passing reference is also made to possible policy implications which can be drawn from the results, particularly in the area of minimum wages and related social security measures directed specifically at low-wage groups.

Thanks are due to officials of the Canada Department of Manpower and Immigration, Pacific Region whose co-operation and assistance facilitated the carrying-out of the survey. The following persons assisted in coding information at different Canada Manpower Centres: S. Churchill, G. Davies, S. Felber, K. Guthrie, F. Hegan, K. MacIntosh and V. Thompson. Typing was done by P. Ringrose-Campbell. Computer programming for analysis of the survey data was performed by V. Trueman.

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[1] Caution should be used in interpreting results from those Manpower Centres where the size of the low-wage sample was comparatively small.

Survey Coverage and Methodology

A sample of nine out of a total of twenty-five Canada Manpower Centres in British Columbia were covered by the low-wage survey. These offices were located in areas which were considered to be reasonably representative of the provincial industrial and occupational mix, since a lack of staff availability precluded coverage of all Manpower Centres in the province. Information was collected at the following Manpower Centres at different periods during the late summer and fall of 1975:

Victoria	August 25 - September 30
Kamloops	November 4 - 6
Vancouver (Howe St)	July 23 - August 15
New Westminster	October 20 - 24
Abbotsford	November 18 - 19
Prince George	November 5 - 7
Terrace	November
Kitimat	November
Nelson	December 1 - 3

The data on low-wage earners was obtained from the Master Registration forms 701-E or 701-U completed by most persons registering for employment with Canada Manpower. These forms are designed to record pertinent personal information as well as details of registrants' education, training and previous work history. Up to fifteen personal and labour market characteristics were coded from all active files on low-wage earners in a form suitable for later analysis by computer program. No information was recorded which could be later used to disclose the identity of individual registrants.

Two principal criteria were employed to define the upper limits of the low-wage sample. To be included, registrants had to have earned less than $4.00 per hour

in their last job, and such employment must have commenced no earlier than June 1974. Alternatively, the upper limit on earnings for inclusion in the sample was set at $160 per week or $700 per month, based on an arbitrary assumption of hours worked by regular, full-time employees. Information was also coded for registrants who had no previous work experience but who had indicated a willingness to work for less than $4.00 per hour or the equivalent during the survey period.

The upper cutoff on earnings was established with reference to the prevailing level of the provincial minimum wage. A minimum rate of $2.50 per hour was in force for workers 18 years and over during the period from June 3, 1974 to November 30, 1975, effectively coinciding with the maximum duration of survey coverage. A gap of $1.50 between the earnings cutoff and the minimum wage was felt to be appropriate in view of the rapid price inflation and large wage settlements being negotiated in the province over this period.[1] Both these factors would tend to exert upward pressure on even the lowest wage levels, and presumably also on employees' individual wage expectations. Another consideration in selecting $4.00 per hour as the earnings cutoff was that the inclusion of a fairly wide range of wage rates in the sample would permit comparative analysis of workers' characteristics within the low-wage group. In particular, data collected for persons earning less than $2.75 per hour was analyzed in a separate computer run, and was subsequently compared with tabulated results for the low-wage sample as a whole.

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1. Average weekly wages for B.C. rose from $203.07 in July 1974 to $240.96 in November 1975, an increase of 18.7%. The Vancouver Consumer Price Index rose by 15.3% over the survey period.

In all, characteristics were coded for a total of 9,096 low-wage registrants who represented about 24% of the approximately 37,750 active client files at the surveyed Canada Manpower Centres. The proportion of registrants included in the low-wage sample showed a considerable degree of variation at different locations, as is indicated in the following cross-sectional breakdown:

	Low-Wage Sample	Active CMC Registration	Low-Wage Sample as % of CMC Registration
Victoria	2,233	7,454	30.0%
Kamloops	922	3,154	29.2%
Vancouver (Howe St)	1,582	8,721	18.1%
New Westminster	1,736	7,038	24.7%
Abbotsford	561	2,040	27.5%
Prince George	1,097	4,527	24.2%
Terrace	352	3,169	19.2%
Kitimat	255		
Nelson	358	1,639	21.8%
Total	9,096	37,742	24.1%

Source: Report of Registered Clients and Vacancies, Canada Department of Manpower and Immigration, Man. 757.

Before describing the results of the survey in detail, it may be useful to mention a number of factors which could affect the generality of any policy conclusions to be drawn from data:

(a) A basic assumption underlying the survey methodology is that the characteristics of low-wage earners registered with Canada Manpower will be representative of the total low-wage population. Since 97.7% of the workers included in the sample were unemployed at the time of their registration with Canada Man-

power, there is the possibility that this group may tend to experience higher rates of turnover than the "typical" employed low-wage earner. A recent study by the Economic Council of Canada in fact indicates that Manpower Centres carry a disproportionate number of low-skill jobs which are "unattractive, frequently of a temporary nature, low-paying and non-unionized."[1]

(b) The composition of the sample may have been influenced to some extent by general labour market conditions prevailing during the latter half of 1975. The actual provincial unemployment rate averaged 7.8% over the survey period. Recessionary conditions are known to exert a disproportionately adverse effect on unemployment rates for young persons and other disadvantaged labour force groups which might have biased the sample in this direction. On the other hand, the requirement that Unemployment Insurance claiments must register with Canada Manpower to qualify for benefits would tend to improve the representativeness of the sample.

(c) Survey results may also reflect differences between the occupational characteristics of workers registered with Canada Manpower as compared to the occupational distribution for the overall provincial labour force. In Figure 1, data drawn from the monthly Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Canada is contrasted with the occupational distribution of the total active client registration at the surveyed Manpower Centres. This indicates an over-representation of about 5% among Manpower registrants in the clerical and construction categories, while there were 2.7% and 5% fewer managerial/professional and sales personnel than their corresponding proportion in the Labour Force Survey. In addition, agricultural workers are under-represented in the sample because of seasonal factors as well as the existence of separate Manpower Farm Labour Pools which were not covered by the low-wage survey.

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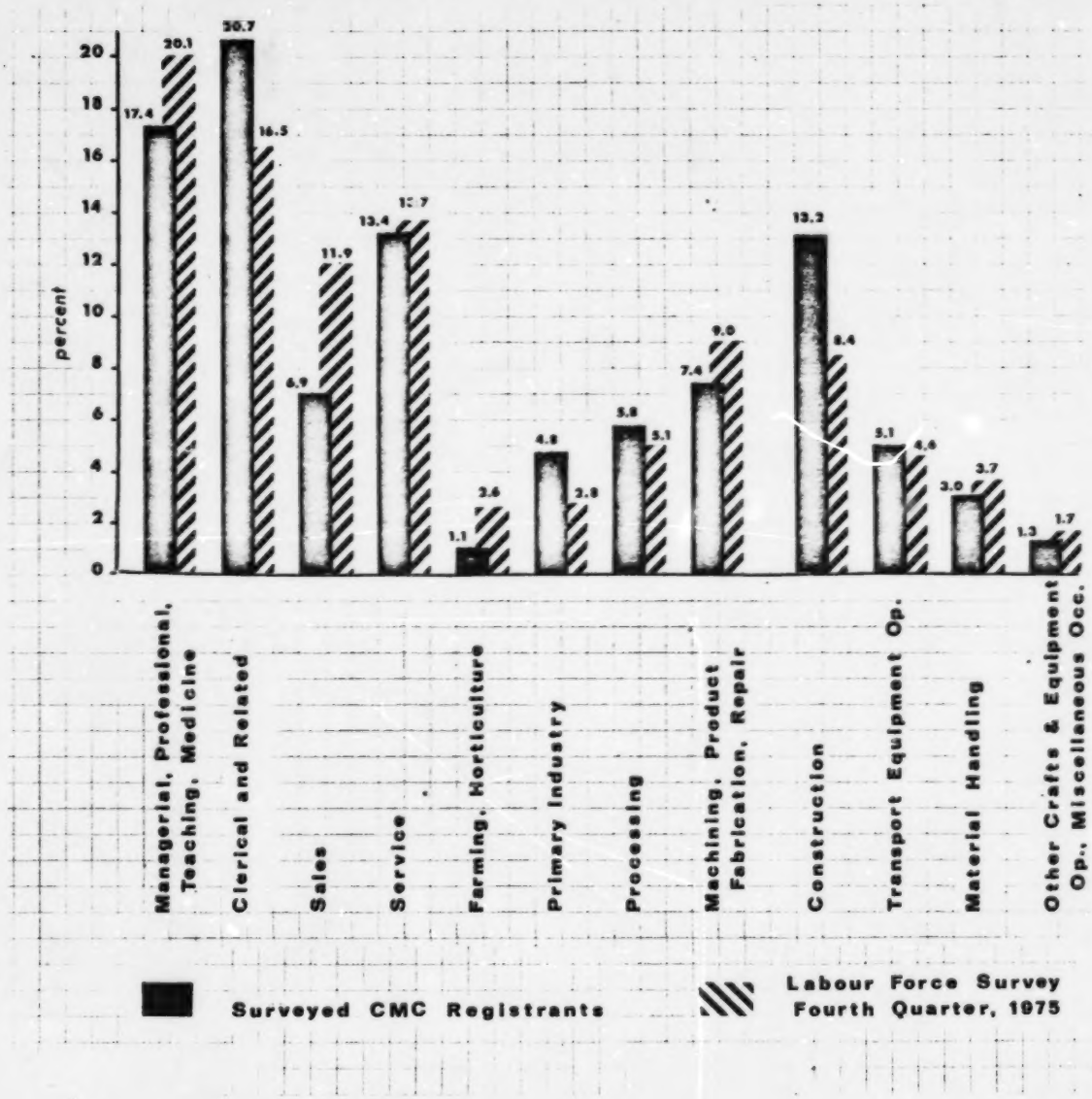
1. People and Jobs, Economic Council of Canada, 1976, p. 132.

Figure 1 PERCENTAGE OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION FOR B.C. LABOUR FORCE, TOTAL SURVEYED CMC REGISTRANTS



Demographic & Personal Characteristics

(a) Sex and Age

The Survey provided clear confirmation of the results of other studies which have shown a heavy concentration of women in low-paying employment.[1] Of the total of 9,096 low-wage registrants, 67.3% were female and there was an even greater proportion of women (74.3%) among persons who had earned less than $2.75 per hour. This was in marked contrast to the composition of the provincial labour force where women represented only 35.7% of the total during the second half of 1975.

The sex distribution of the sample varied considerably among the surveyed Canada Manpower Centres. The lowest proportion of women was found at two of the larger urban Centres (Vancouver - Howe Street, 56.2%; Victoria, 59.1%), whereas over 80% of the low-wage registrants in Prince George, Terrace and Kitimat were female. Results from the other surveyed centres also indicated that at least 70% of the low-wage earners were women.

The age breakdown of the sample showed a strong association between youth and low rates of pay, a clear indication that a lack of labour market experience is a major contributory factor. Over half of the low-wage registrants (53.7%) were under 25 years of age while only 5.6% were 55 years or older (Table 1). A similar

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1 e.g. Labour Canada, Women in the Labour Force: Facts and Figures, 1973; "Women in British Columbia's Labour Force", Pt. 2, Labour Research Bulletin, B.C. Ministry of Labour, April 1976, pp. 15-26.

age pattern was evident for the group earning less than $2.75 per hour and, not surprisingly, this included an even greater proportion of teenagers (27.7%) than for the sample as a whole (20.4%). From a cross-sectional point of view, the most notable distributional variation was the comparatively small proportion of under-19 low-wage registrants at both the Vancouver (9.6%) and Victoria (14.7%) Canada Manpower Centres.[1]

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY SEX AND AGE (%)

	19 & Under	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Not Stated
Male	25.1	34.6	23.4	6.0	4.3	4.0	1.2	1.3
Female	18.1	32.7	22.5	10.8	8.4	5.1	0.6	1.7
TOTAL	20.4	33.3	22.8	9.2	7.1	4.8	0.8	1.6

The greatest proportion of both male and female low-wage earners was found in the 20-24 age category. However, the average age of male registrants (26.3) was somewhat lower than for female low-wage earners (28.6).[2] This disparity was largely attributable to

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1 See Appendix for the percentage age distribution of the total registered claimants at the surveyed CMC's.

2 The modal, or most common, age for both sexes in the sample was 19 years.

the much larger proportion of male teenagers along with a greater concentration of females in the 35-64 age brackets. The latter result probably reflects both the lesser overall degree of upward job mobility available to working women as well as discontinuities in female labour force participation.

Comparison with the age distribution of the B.C. labour force (Table 2) provides additional evidence of the disproportionate representation of young people in low-paid employment. Only about a quarter of the total labour force was under 25 years of age compared to over half of the survey sample. At the other extreme, 11% of the provincial labour force was 55 years or over as opposed to only 5.6% of the low-wage registrants.

TABLE 2

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LABOUR FORCE BY SEX AND AGE (%), 4th QUARTER 1975

	14-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Male	9.2	12.5	27.4	21.2	17.3	10.7	1.6
Female	13.8	16.9	25.1	19.7	15.8	7.9	0.9
TOTAL	10.8	14.1	26.6	20.7	16.7	9.7	1.3

Source: Calculated from detailed provincial labour force data supplied by Statistics Canada.

(b) Marital Status and Dependents

One of the most important aspects of minimum wage and income security policy is to ascertain whether or not low-wage workers have extensive family responsibilities. In fact, a frequent criticism of the minimum wage as a means of alleviating poverty is that it fails to take into account differing family sizes and income requirements. Low-wage earnings which are adequate for an unattached individual may be well below the poverty level for a family unit[1] in the absence of additional employment opportunities or a second family income. There is also the important question of the degree of work incentive provided by minimum wage earnings which often approximate levels of income available under various social assistance programs. Finally, information regarding the family structure characteristics of low-wage earners is necessary in order to realistically evaluate the potential "social costs" of unemployment which could result from increases in the hourly minimum wage.[2]

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1 For example, hypothetical annual full-time earnings of $5,500 at the B.C. minimum wage of $2.75 effective December 1, 1975 may be compared with the following poverty-line estimates for January 1976:

Family Size	Poverty-Line Estimate
1	$3,485
2	5,808
3	6,969
4	8,131*

* Standard based on one-half of 1975 average Canadian family income of $16,263 (Income Distributions By Size in Canada, Statistics Canada, 13-206; p. 6

2 For a more complete discussion of the foregoing aspects, see A Survey of Recent Canadian Minimum Wage Research, 17th Annual Meeting of the Statistics and Research Committee of the C.A.A.L.L., May 5-7, 1975, pp. 27-33, 42-47.

In overall terms, the survey results showed that 52.7% of the low-wage earners were single while only 37.5% were married. This pattern was even more pronounced among registrants earning less than $2.75 per hour where the corresponding proportions were 55.8% single and 35.0% married. As the breakdown in Table 3 indicates, the marital status of the low-wage registrants was clearly related to the young average age of the sample. Over 40% of the sample were single persons under 25 years of age, while married persons in the prime labour force age categories (25-64) constituted only about a quarter of the total.

Table 3

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY AGE AND MARITAL STATUS (%)*

	Single	Married	Other	
19 and under	90.9	6.9	2.2	100.0
20 - 24	67.3	27.5	5.2	100.0
25 - 34	34.9	51.9	13.2	100.0
35 - 44	13.6	68.4	18.0	100.0
45 - 54	12.1	66.5	21.4	100.0
55 - 64	13.9	63.0	23.1	100.0
65 and over	17.1	64.3	18.6	100.0
TOTAL	52.7	37.5	9.8	100.0

* Information on age or marital status was unavailable for 1.6% of the sample.

There was also a significant degree of regional variation in terms of the marital status of low-wage

earners. The percentage of married registrants ranged from a low of 26.0% and 34.1% at the Victoria and Vancouver Manpower Centres respectively, up to 45.9% in Prince George, and well over 50% in Terrace and Kitimat. On the other hand, registrants indicating their marital status as "other" consistently made up about a tenth of the sample at nearly all of the Centres across the province.

Analysis of the marital results by sex indicated a far higher proportion of married persons among female than male low-wage earners (Table 4). Of the total number of registrants in both the married and "other" marital status categories, women made up over 80% for the sample as a whole and nearly 90% within the group earning less than $2.75 per hour. Compared to the overall provincial labour force, however, the low-wage sample contained a much lower proportion of married persons, particularly among men. Survey results for the second half of 1975 indicated that on average 65.4% of the B.C. labour force was married, comprising 70.1% for males and 57.0% for females.[1]

Table 4

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY SEX AND MARITAL STATUS (%)*

	Single	Married	Other	
Male	73.0	21.1	5.8	100.0
Female	42.9	45.4	11.7	100.0
TOTAL	52.7	37.5	9.8	100.0

* Information on sex or marital status was unavailable for 1.6% of the sample.

1 The Labour Force, Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 71-001,

The high percentage of young, unmarried persons in the sample suggests that most low-wage workers do not have extensive family responsibilities. This conclusion is strengthened by the small number of dependents reported by low-wage registrants; 83.3% of the sample as a whole and 85.5% of those earning less than $2.75 per hour indicated they had no dependents.[1] These results were quite consistent at the different Manpower Centres surveyed across the province.

Taking married low-wage earners separately, the distribution showed a considerably higher level of dependent responsibility (Table 5). Even so 68.0% of this group also reported having no dependents, and only 16.6% of married men and 6.6% of married women had three or more dependents. There was a similar overall

Table 5

DISTRIBUTION OF MARRIED B.C. LOW-WAGE EARNERS BY SEX AND NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS (%)

	Number of Dependents					
	None	1	2	3	4 or more	
Male	33.1	30.5	19.8	10.4	6.2	100.0
Female	75.8	9.8	7.8	3.7	2.9	100.0
TOTAL	68.0	13.6	10.0	4.9	3.5	100.0

1 The consistency of these results may be somewhat affected by differing perceptions of registrants in completing the Canada Manpower questionnaire. For example, the number of indicated dependents could also include parents, spouse, etc., as well as minor children.

proportion of registrants within the "other" marital status category who stated they had no dependents (64.0%). However, there was a slightly greater proportion of women than men in this category who had dependents, perhaps an indication of the difficulties faced by female single parents in locating suitable employment opportunities.

(c) Education and Training

Low wages have been traditionally associated with inadequate education attainment and/or a lack of specific job-related skills. Based on this assumption, government manpower policy in Canada and the United States during the 1960's involved a heavy emphasis on training, upgrading and mobility programs aimed at improving employment opportunities for unskilled and various other disadvantaged groups of workers.[1] More recently, however, there has been increased recognition of institutional and other labour market factors inhibiting movement out of low-paid jobs which may be equally or more important than deficiences in workers' so-called "human capital".[2]

From this perspective, the B.C. survey results do not give any indication of a direct link between a lack of formal education and low wage levels. Well over 80% of registrants in the sample had at least some high school education, with Grade 12 being the most prevalent

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1 Economic Council of Canada, op. cit., p. 134.

2 e.g. Manpower Economic Development Advisory Board, Manpower Issues in Manitoba, June 1975, pp. 55 - 88, 109 - 135.

level for both men and women. A considerably greater proportion of women than men had completed high school, although a somewhat larger percentage of men had either attempted a university course or had actually received a degree (Table 6). In general, educational levels for both men and women were only slightly lower among registrants earning less than $2.75 per hour. Of this subgroup, 52.5% had Grade 11 or less; 34.0% had completed either Grade 12 or 13; and 13.5% had gone on to take some form of advanced education.

Table 6

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY YEARS OF FORMAL EDUCATION AND SEX (%)*

	Male	Female	Total
Grade 8 or less	9.2	8.3	8.6
Grade 9	7.3	5.7	6.3
Grade 10	18.9	17.3	17.8
Grade 11	14.0	14.2	14.1
Grade 12	28.5	38.6	35.3
Grade 13	2.3	1.7	1.9
Some higher education	12.1	9.3	10.2
University degree	7.7	4.9	5.9
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Information on level of education or sex was unavailable for 2.2% of the sample.

** Includes attendance at university, completion of course at junior college or recognized technological training institution.

Analysis of the data in terms of age showed significant variation in educational levels among younger

and older workers (Table 7). A mere 4.2% of the low-wage registrants under 25 reported having a Grade 8 education or less, whereas this figure was 24.7% among those who were 55 and over. Similarly, 14.5% in the youngest age categories (under 25) had some higher education or a university degree, while this was only 6.9% among the older group. There was also a remarkably large proportion of low-wage earners in the 25-34 age bracket with a university background. A portion of these age-related disparities in educational levels undoubtedly derives from higher school leaving ages in the post-War

Table 7

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND AGE (%)*

	19 & Under	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Grade 8 or less	6.3	3.1	7.2	18.4	20.9	25.4	20.3
Grade 9	10.1	3.9	4.9	8.7	6.8	8.2	7.8
Grade 10	24.3	12.4	16.3	22.7	21.9	20.7	12.5
Grade 11	16.5	14.8	12.6	12.7	12.4	13.0	12.5
Grade 12	39.7	41.5	29.1	27.1	30.0	23.9	26.6
Grade 13	0.7	2.4	1.7	1.6	2.3	3.2	4.7
Some higher education**	2.3	16.1	13.9	5.6	3.1	4.0	9.4
University degree	0.2	5.8	14.3	3.1	2.6	1.5	6.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Information on education levels or age was unavailable for 1.5% of the low-wage sample.

** Includes attendance at university, completion of course at junior college or recognized technological training institution.

period combined with lower levels of formal education for persons who attended school during the 1920's and 1930's.[1]

Comparison with 1971 Census information indicates that levels of formal education for the low-wage sample were actually somewhat higher than for the overall provincial labour force (Tables 6 & 8). There was a particularly noticeable difference in the respective proportions having a Grade 8 education or less, again a probable reflection of the young average age of low-wage registrants as compared with the population as a whole. There was also considerable regional variation in the educational distribution within the low-wage sample except at the Grade 12 and 13 level. For example, the percentage of registrants with partial or completed post-secondary education was much higher in Vancouver (33.4%), Victoria (21.0%) and Nelson (23.6%) than for the survey as a whole (16.1%), a result likely related to the location of universities in these centres.

Table 8

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LABOUR FORCE BY YEARS OF FORMAL EDUCATION AND SEX (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Grade 8 or less	21.6	13.2	18.7
Grades 9 & 10	23.0	19.7	21.9
Grade 11	11.1	13.3	11.9
Grades 12 & 13	27.4	37.6	30.8
Some university	9.3	11.1	9.9
University degree	7.6	5.0	6.7
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: 1971 Census, Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 94-707, Vol. III, Pt. 1 (Bulletin 3.1-7)

[1] S. Ostry & M. Zaidi, Labour Economics in Canada, 2nd. Edition, Macmillan, Toronto, 1972, pp. 96-100.

In addition to levels of formal education, information was recorded regarding other training acquired by low-wage registrants. This covered all courses taken outside the school curriculum. It was found that only 9.0% of the registrants had undertaken any such additional training which was distributed as follows: Trades, 2.8%; Commercial, 5.5%; Technological, 0.7%. Unfortunately, there was little information available regarding on-the-job training among registrants. This may be an important omission, since it has frequently been suggested that institutional training alone is not an effective method of upgrading disadvantaged workers.[1]

(d) Citizenship and Language

The role of immigrants in the Canadian Labour force has been the subject of considerable debate in recent years, particularly with respect to jobs entailing low-wages and poor working conditions. To provide some insight on this aspect for B.C., information regarding the date of entry and language of non-Canadian low-wage registrants was recorded which enabled comparisons to be made with results for the remainder of the low-wage sample. Since the Department of Manpower and Immigration frequently assists new arrivals in finding their first jobs and also provides limited financial aid in some cases, Canada Manpower registrations are probably a reliable indication of the proportion of non-Canadians among low-wage earners.

The survey results do not suggest that there is a disproportionate number of immigrants in poorly-paid jobs relative to their overall participation in the B.C.

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1 e.g. Economic Council of Canada, Design for Decision Making, 8th Annual Review, 1971, p. 106.

labour force.[1] Only 9.8% of the sample were non-Canadian with an almost exactly equal percentage among male (10.2%) and female (9.6%) registrants. There was a similarly limited proportion of non-Canadians within the group earning less than $2.75 per hour (10.5%). Nearly a quarter of the low-wage registrants at the Vancouver (Howe Street) Manpower Centre were immigrants, but elsewhere across the province non-Canadians represented a tenth or less of the sample. Approximately two thirds of the immigrants had entered Canada from 1970 onward.

A comparison of the age distributions of Canadians and non-Canadians in the sample indicated that the latter group was particularly heavily concentrated in the 25-44 age categories. On the other hand, there was a much lesser representation of immigrants in the under-25 age brackets than for Canadian low-wage registrants (Table 9).

Table 9

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY AGE AND CITIZENSHIP (%)

	Canadian	Non-Canadian	Total
19 and under	21.8	7.0	20.4
20-24	34.6	21.7	33.3
25-34	20.7	42.5	22.8
35-44	8.5	15.8	9.2
45-54	7.1	6.4	7.1
55-64	4.9	3.9	4.8
65 and over	0.7	1.1	0.8
Not stated	1.6	1.6	1.6
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0

[1] Immigrant workers whose stated destination was B.C. represented 6.5% of the average provincial labour force from 1968-1973. By comparison, low-wage immigrants who entered Canada between 1970-1975 made up 6.6% of the survey sample.

There was also a significant difference in educational levels between the two groups (Table 10). Although there was a marginally-higher percentage of non-Canadians in the lowest educational category (Grades 1-8), their proportion with partial or completed higher education (31.1%) was more then twice that of Canadian low-wage registrants (14.5%). This disparity was especially pronounced for Asian immigrants, except among those from the Indian subcontinent. Problems associated with recognition of professional or advanced academic qualifications may be one explanation for the high incidence of low wages among highly-educated immigrants.[1]

Table 10

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (%)

	Canadian	Non-Canadian*	Total
Grades 1-8	8.2	11.7	8.6
Grade 9	6.5	3.8	6.3
Grade 10	18.5	11.5	17.8
Grade 11	14.7	8.5	14.1
Grade 12	35.8	30.1	35.3
Grade 13	1.7	3.2	1.9
Some higher education **	9.7	15.3	10.2
University degree	4.8	15.8	5.9
	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Educational levels include both education taken in Canada as well as equivalents for foreign training as estimated by Canada Manpower.

** Includes attendance at university, completion of technological training institution.

1 Three Years in Canada, Longitudinal Survey the Economic and Social Adaptation of Immigrants, Dept. of Manpower and Immigration, 1974, p. 24.

The languages spoken by non-Canadian low-wage registrants also indicated that a large proportion were of Asian origin (Table 11). English speakers were still the largest single group of immigrants, coming almost entirely from either the United States and Great Britain. However, the linguistic background of non-Canadians was quite varied at different Manpower Centres. Most notably, there was a larger-than-average number of Chinese immigrants in Vancouver (23.3%), while persons speaking Indo-Pakistani languages were disproportionately represented in the immigrant sample at the New Westminster, Kamloops, Terrace and Abbotsford offices.

Table 11

LANGUAGE DISTRIBUTION OF NON-CANADIAN LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY SEX (%)

	Male	Female	Total
Indo-Pakistani Languages	17.2	22.2	20.5
Chinese	18.5	9.9	12.8
Southern European*	6.0	9.9	8.6
German, Dutch	4.6	7.9	6.8
Other Asian**	5.0	5.1	5.1
Eastern European	2.6	3.1	2.9
Scandinavian	1.0	1.0	1.0
French	1.7	0.5	0.9
Other***	43.4	40.3	41.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Portuguese, Spanish, Greek, Italian

** Primarily Japanese, Korean and Filipino

*** Overwhelmingly English-speaking. Non-Canadian registrants with differing linguistic backgrounds may also speak English.

Labour Market Characteristics

(a) Occupation

Survey results on the occupational distribution of low-wage earners showed a distinct concentration in three main categories. Clerical, sales and service - type jobs accounted for more than two thirds (67.8%) of the total sample. There was an even greater weighting in these three areas (71.2%) among registrants earning less than $2.75 per hour. A slightly smaller proportion of clerical workers within this lowest-paid group was more than offset by a greater number of sales and service workers relative to the overall sample distribution.

The occupational breakdown for the B.C. labour force for the second half of 1975 is contrasted with the low-wage results in Table 12. This also includes the corresponding tabulation for the total registration at the Canada Manpower Centres covered by the survey. Once more, it is obvious that service, and especially clerical, workers were over-represented among low-wage registrants, although the sample proportion of sales occupations was almost identical to labour force survey results for the province. There were relatively fewer low-wage registrants in almost all the other broad occupational classifications. However, the wide disparity in figures shown for construction trades is mainly attributable to the low overall sample proportion of male registrants who made up nearly nine tenths of low-wage earners in this category.

Other major occupational groups also showed a considerable degree of "sex-typing" within the sample group (Figure 2). Almost 80% of female low-wage earners worked at clerical, sales and service jobs. Women were

Table 12

OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION FOR B.C. LABOUR FORCE,

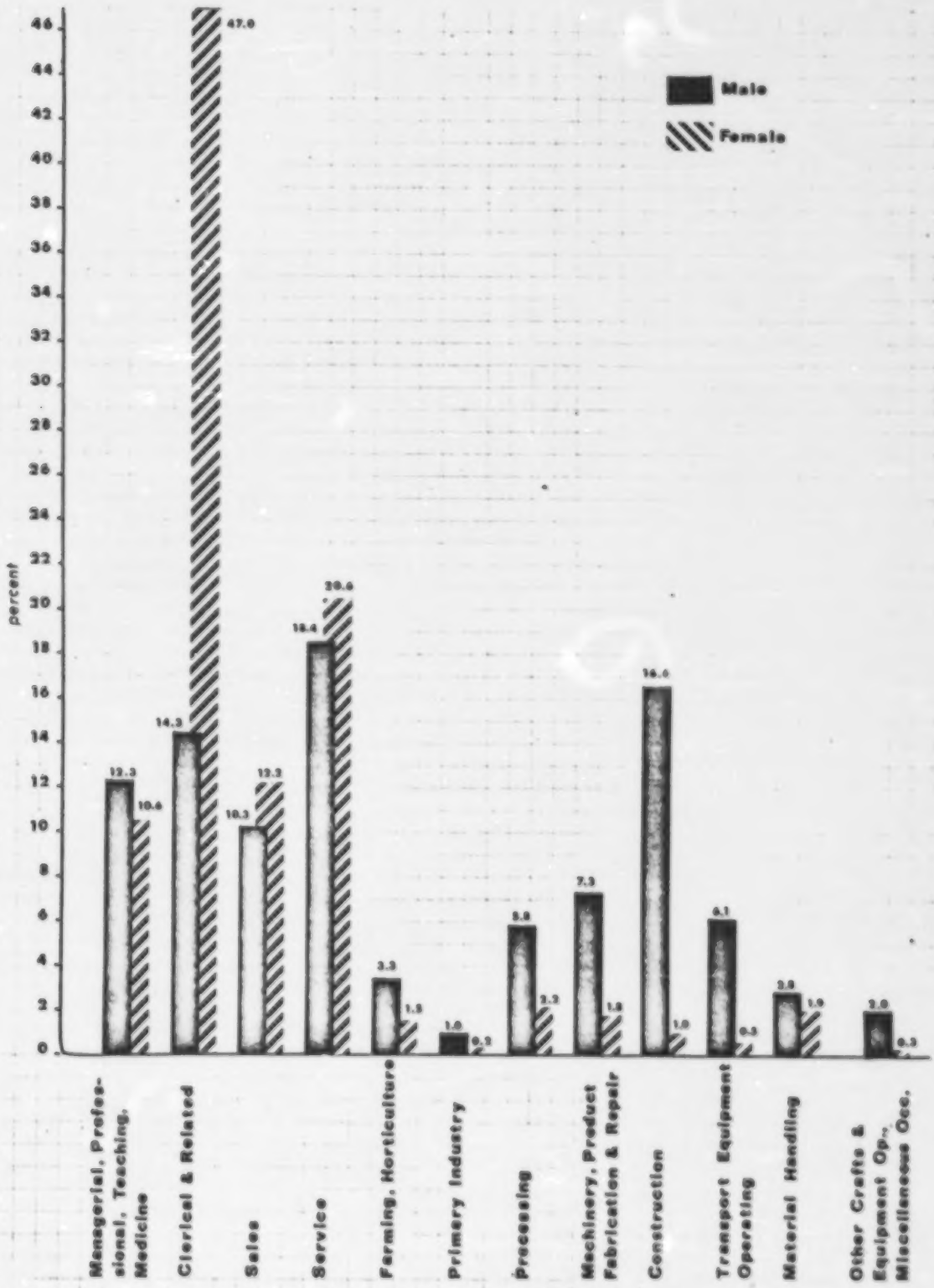
SURVEYED CMC REGISTRANTS, LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS(%)

	L.F.* Survey	Surveyed CMC** Registrants	Low-Wage Earners
Managerial	5.7	3.0	0.7
Natural Science	3.2	4.5	1.8
Social Science	1.2	2.6	1.9
Teaching	4.4	2.8	1.7
Medicine and Health	4.4	3.1	3.2
Artistic & Literary	1.2	1.2	1.7
Sports & Recreation	-	0.2	0.2
Clerical Occupations	16.5	20.7	36.3
Sales Occupations	11.9	6.9	11.6
Service Occupations	13.7	13.4	19.9
Farming, Horticulture	2.6	1.1	2.1
Fishing & Trapping	0.4	0.2	0.0
Forestry & Logging	1.9	3.9	0.4
Mining & Quarrying	0.5	0.7	0.1
Processing Occupations	5.1	5.8	3.4
Machining Occupations	2.2	2.2	0.5
Product Fabrication, Repair	6.8	5.2	3.1
Construction Trades	8.4	13.2	6.1
Transport Equip. Operating	4.6	5.1	2.3
Material-Handling Occup.	3.7	3.0	2.2
Other Crafts & Equip. Op.	1.1	0.7	0.4
Other Occupations	-	0.6	0.5
Never Worked	0.6	-	-
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0

* 4th Quarter, 1975. Labour Force Survey, Special Tabulations for B.C. (Monthly), Statistics Canada.

** Total registrants at surveyed CMC's at closest reference dates to low wage survey. Report of Registered Clients and Vacancies, Canada Department of Manpower & Immigration, Man. 757 (Various Months). See Appendix for the occupational distribution by sex of all registrants at these Centres.

Figure 2 PERCENTAGE OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND SEX



found particularly in low-paid clerical occupations where they comprised 87.2% of the total registrants in this category. Although there was a small but balanced proportion of both sexes in managerial occupations, women also dominated low-paid medicine and health (89.7%) and teaching (78.7%) positions. On the other hand, there was a strong preponderance of men in machining (86.4%), construction (88.7%), and transportation equipment operation (86.5%), occupations which together represented something less than a tenth of the overall sample.

Analysis of the data at a more detailed level of aggregation made it possible to identify certain specific occupations in which there was a clear sex demarcation, as well as a few low-paying areas with a notable concentration of both sexes. A breakdown of the occupational results at the 4-digit level of the CCDO[1] classification showed that there was a slightly narrower range of job classifications covering women than men in the sample; 209 categories contained women compared to 247 for low-wage men. Moreover, nineteen major occupations with 100 or more registrants accounted for nearly three quarters of the female registrants as opposed to slightly less than half of the male low-wage earners (Table 13). A certain degree of male/female overlap was evident in certain personal service areas, and also in two labouring categories. Nevertheless, the most remarkable feature was again the overwhelming predominance of women in just seven clerical and office classifications (4111 to 4197) which encompassed fully 30.7% of entire sample.

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1 Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations, 1971, Canada Department of Manpower and Immigration.

Table 13

DISTRIBUTION OF LOW-WAGE OCCUPATIONS
WITH 100 OR MORE REGISTRANTS OF EITHER SEX (%)

CCDO Code	Name	Male	Female	Total
3135	Nursing Aides	0.4	1.7	1.3
4111	Secretaries, Stenos	0.1	3.6	2.5
4113	Typists, Clerk Typists	0.1	6.2	4.2
4131	Bookkeepers, Account Clerks	1.8	4.6	3.7
4133	Tellers, Cashiers	0.1	7.6	5.1
4155	Stock Clerks & Related	3.4	0.6	1.5
4171	Receptionists, Information Clerks	0.1	4.5	3.0
4197	General Office Clerks	3.8	14.1	10.7
5137	Sales Clerks - Commodities	3.2	10.0	7.8
5145	Service Station Attendants	3.8	0.4	1.5
6121	Chefs and Cooks	3.0	2.2	2.4
6125	Waiters, Waitresses	1.4	8.1	5.9
6133	Chambermaids	-	2.1	1.5
6149	Personal Services Rec.	4.0	2.0	2.6
6191	Cleaners	3.5	1.1	1.9
6198	Labouring (Services)	2.1	2.4	2.3
8798	Labouring Construction	11.4	0.8	4.3
9175	Truck Drivers	3.4	0.3	1.3
9318	Labouring (Material Handling)	2.1	1.8	1.9
Percent of Total Sample		47.7	74.1	65.4

There were only a few salient features when the major occupational groups were analyzed in terms of age (Table 14). Half or slightly more of the low-wage earners in clerical, sales and service occupations were under 25 years of age, with a particularly large percentage of sales personnel being 19 years or less. There was some degree of over-representation of both sales and service employees

in the age brackets over 45, whereas clerical workers were distributed fairly consistently across the various age categories. Not surprisingly, there was a noticeably disproportionate number of younger workers in low-paid construction and, to a lesser extent in product fabrication, machining, transport equipment operation and processing work.

Table 14

DISTRIBUTION OF LOW-WAGE EARNERS
BY MAJOR OCCUPATIONAL GROUP AND AGE (%)*

	19& Under	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Managerial/ Professional	5.3	36.9	39.0	8.1	5.4	2.4	0.8
Clerical	17.2	36.8	23.5	9.7	6.9	3.6	0.8
Sales	28.4	26.5	16.2	9.2	9.2	7.6	1.2
Service	22.2	27.8	19.0	10.2	9.5	7.6	1.1
Farming	19.1	26.6	21.8	13.3	5.9	10.1	1.1
Primary Ind.	34.9	18.6	32.6	11.6	0.0	2.3	0.0
Processing	22.7	32.5	26.3	9.7	5.5	2.3	0.0
Machining	13.6	43.2	34.1	6.8	0.0	2.3	0.0
Pr. Fabric.	21.0	36.4	18.5	10.1	8.4	4.9	0.0
Construction	36.8	37.0	15.1	3.8	4.1	2.2	0.4
Transport Eq. Operation	28.8	39.9	21.6	6.3	1.4	1.4	0.5
Material Hdlg	25.2	35.1	22.3	9.9	4.0	2.5	0.0
Other	27.1	28.2	20.0	8.2	5.9	9.4	0.0
TOTAL	20.4	33.3	22.8	9.2	7.1	4.8	0.8

* Omits 1.6% of total registrants who did not indicate their age; as a result, occupational totals may not add to 100%.

Considerable variation was evident in the occupational distribution of low-wage registrants among the surveyed Manpower Centres, undoubtedly a reflection of differences in the structure of local labour markets

and regional industry mix across the province. The proportion of clerical workers was fairly consistent at between 11-13% for a majority of offices, with the exceptions of Vancouver (Howe Street) and Victoria which had less than a tenth and Prince George (17.8%). However, sales and service occupations which combined made up 56.2% of the overall sample displayed a much wider regional spread as follows: Abbotsford, 44.2%; Nelson, 45.8%; N.Westminster, 51.0%; Vancouver, 54.4%; Kitimat, 56.5%; Kamloops, 59.8%; Prince George, 60.4%; Victoria, 61.0% and Terrace, 65.1%. A final noteworthy feature was the fact that four of the smaller centres (Abbotsford, Nelson, Kitimat, Terrace) had about 15% of their low-wage registrants in construction trades, compared to an overall sample proportion of only 6.1%.

(b) Industry

In most Western economies, low rates of pay were associated traditionally with long-established, labour-intensive industries faced with either static or contracting product demands, and where employment levels might actually be on the decline. Typically, these were small-sale, manufacturing industries in which workers were poorly organized and where unit project margins tended to be relatively low. Along with the general rise in national incomes over the last three decades, however, there has also been a distinct shift in the industrial distribution of low-wage workers. The bulk of low-wage work is now found in the non-manufacturing, "tertiary" sector which has been expanding more rapidly than other areas of these economies.[1]

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[1] e.g. V. Fuchs, The Service Economy, Columbia University Press, 1968.

A similar shift has also been evident within the B.C. economy.[1] Classification of the low-wage registrants by major industrial groupings shows that nearly four-fifths were located in the tertiary sector, with over two-thirds in Services and Trade alone (Figure 3). Almost half of the female low-wage earners worked in Service industries, while slightly under a quarter of both sexes were employed in Wholesale or Retail Trade. Manufacturing jobs accounted for only one tenth of the sample.

There was an even more striking degree of industrial concentration among workers earning less than $2.75 per hour. Within this sub-group, fully 51% were employed in the Service sector while another 25.7% were in Trade. All other industrial categories except Agriculture contained slightly smaller percentages of the lowest-paid registrants than the corresponding results for the entire sample.

Comparison of the survey data with the industrial distribution of the B.C. labour force for 1975 re-emphasizes the over-representation of Trade and particularly Service sector jobs among low-wage workers (Table 15). Interestingly, the latter result reflects a much lower concentration of <u>males</u> in Service industries, whereas there was an almost identical proportion of female service employment found in both the provincial labour force and survey sample.[2] Finance, insurance and real estate was the only other important sector with a slightly larger percentage of low-wage workers of

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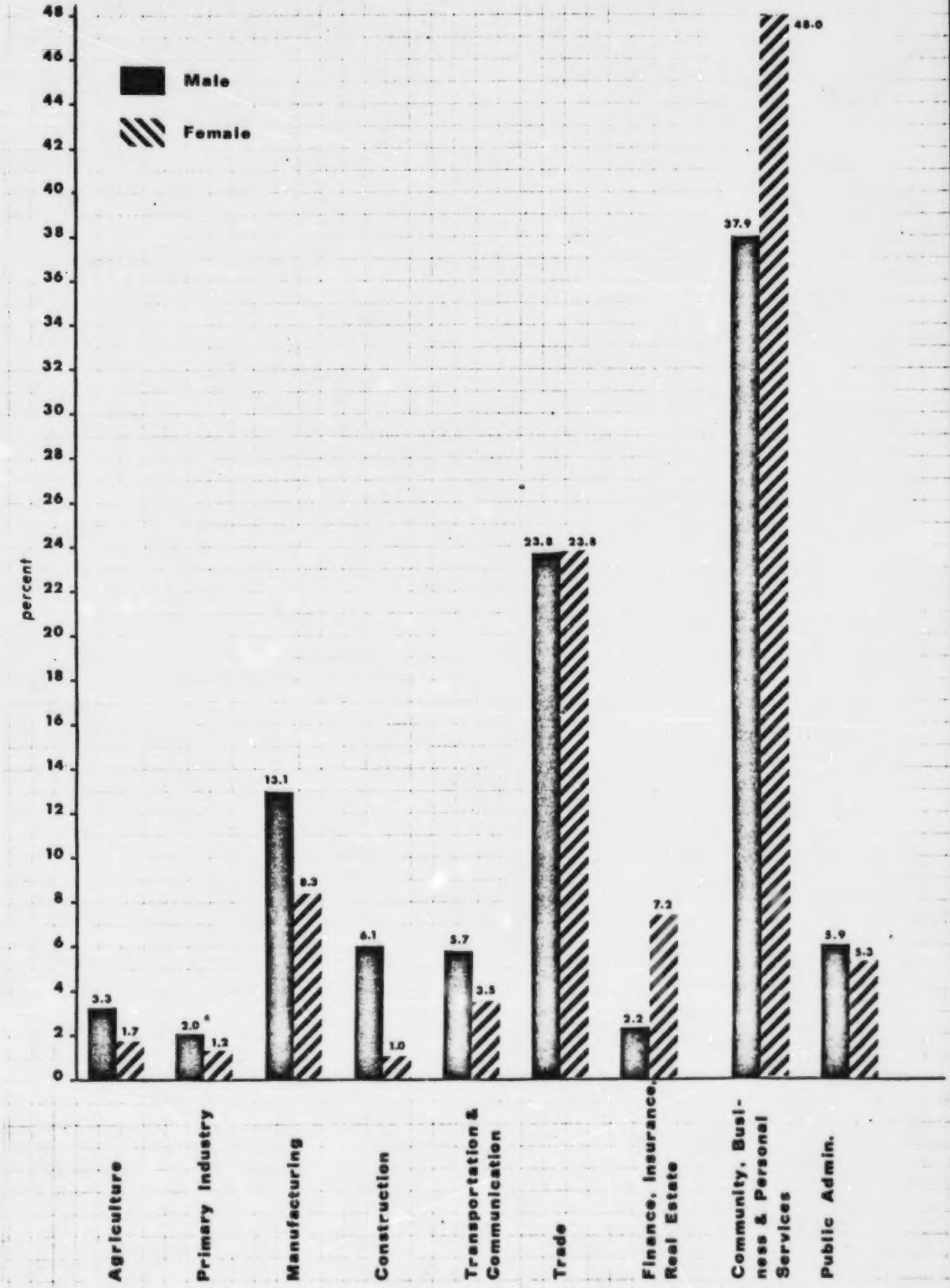
1 "Minimum Wages: A Survey of Policy and Issues", <u>Labour Research Bulletin</u>, April 1975, pp. 26-28.

2 Compare Figure 3 and Table 15.

Figure 3 PERCENTAGE OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY MAJOR INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION AND SEX



both sexes than for the overall labour force.

Table 15

INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LABOUR FORCE BY SEX, AND LOW-WAGE EARNERS(%)

	B.C. Labour Force*			Low-Wage Earners**
	Male	Female	Total	Total
Agriculture	1.7	1.5	1.6	2.2
Other Primary	6.5	0.7	4.4	1.5
Manufacturing	19.9	8.0	15.6	9.9
Construction	12.1	1.7	8.2	2.6
Transport & Communication	13.3	5.4	10.3	4.2
Trade	17.9	20.7	18.9	23.8
Finance, Insur. & Real Estate	3.3	8.3	5.2	5.6
Community, Bus. & Per. Service	17.7	46.1	28.3	44.7
Public Admin.	6.8	6.1	6.4	5.5
Miscellaneous	.7	1.5	1.1	-
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* 1975 averages. Source: The Labour Force, Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 71-001.

** Industry information was unavailable for 0.4% of the low-wage sample.

Analyzed in terms of age, there was little significant deviation from the sample distribution among the different industrial groups. There was an above-average proportion of workers under 25 in Transportation, Public Administration and Finance, Insurance and Real Estate, despite a lesser representation of teenagers in each of these sectors. Conversely, both Trade and Construction had significantly higher concentrations of

19-year-olds than for the sample as a whole. At the other end of the age spectrum, Trade and Agriculture were the only two industries with even a slightly disproportionate number of registrants 55 years and over.

There were several interesting features in terms of the education of low-wage earners in various industries. Over a third of those employed in agricultural work had a Grade 8 education or less compared to 8.6% for the total sample. Manufacturing, Construction and Trade also had above-average numbers with less than high school graduation, though with a less noticeable concentration in the elementary grades. Finance, Insurance and Real Estate had the largest single group of registrants who had completed Grades 12 or 13 (57.9%), followed distantly by Transportation with 42.7%. At the top of the educational scale, the Service industries and Public Administration were the only sectors with a disproportionately-large number of registrants who had some degree of higher education. For Public Administration, 31.2% of registrants had undertaken either partial or completed university training, a figure which was almost double the corresponding sample proportion of 16.1%.

As with the occupational breakdowns, there was a wide degree of variation in the distribution of low-wage earners by industry at different Canada Manpower Centres. An indication of the degree of regional industrial variation is shown in Table 16 which lists those Centres deviating from the total sample distribution by at least 5% (plus or minus) for the Service and Trade sectors and 3% for all other industries. Perhaps the most interesting results are the contrasting proportions of low-wage workers in Manufacturing and

Public Administration at two of the larger offices, Victoria and New Westminster.

Table 16

SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL VARIATION
OF LOW-WAGE SAMPLE BY INDUSTRY (%)

Industry	% of * Total Sample	% Deviation from ** Sample Distribtion
Agriculture	2.2	Kamloops, +3.5 Abbotsford, +8.9
Other Primary	1.5	Nelson, +5.2
Manufacturing	9.9	Kitimat, -5.6 Terrace, -4.8 Victoria, -4.5 Nelson, -3.7 Kamloops, -3.0 New Westminster, +5.9 Abbotsford, +8.4
Construction	2.6	Terrace, +4.5 Kitimat, +8.0
Trade	23.8	Nelson, -10.1 New Westminster, +5.0 Kitimat, +13.4
Finance, Insurance Real Estate	5.6	Terrace, -4.7
Services	44.7	Abbotsford, -11.1 Nelson, +8.0 Terrace, +13.0
Public Administration	5.5	Kitimat, -5.1; Terrace, -4.9; Abbotsford, -4.6; New Westminster, -3.5; Kamloops, -3.4; Victoria, +7.4

* Shows percentage of the total sample within specific industry group.

** Shows variation of the regional sample from total sample for specific industry group.

(c) Wage Frequency and Desired Wage

Information on the wage rate or salary received on his or her last job was recorded for all but 7.7% of the low-wage sample. Where this remuneration was indicated as a weekly or monthly salary on the Manpower registration form, it was converted to an approximate hourly equivalent on the basis of arbitrary assumptions of the number of hours worked per pay period (40 hours per week; 175 hours per month). Workers paid solely on a commission basis were not included, since in most cases it would have been impossible to estimate an appropriate weekly or monthly salary. Similarly, it was not possible to take account of tips or gratuities normally received in certain service occupations.

The wage data was classified by $.25 intervals, with the resulting frequency showing two minor peaks centering around $2.50 and $3.00 per hour. The modal, or most common, wage rate cited was $2.50 (the minimum wage), while the average wage for all registrants was $3.04. Equal proportions of the sample distribution were situated above and below the median rate of $3.00.

Even within the low-wage sample, women tended to earn lower wages than men. Their average wage rates were $3.01 and $3.12 respectively. This disparity was especially pronounced towards the upper end of the wage distribution where there were 30.7% of male registrants who had earned $3.50 or more as opposed to only 20.7% for female registrants (Table 17).

Table 17

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY SEX AND WAGE LAST JOB (%)

	Less Than $2.50	$2.50 -2.74	$2.75 -2.99	$3.00 -3.24	$3.25 -3.49	$3.50 -3.74	$3.75 -3.99
Male	5.1	16.7	14.7	17.9	14.8	18.4	12.3
Female	8.3	21.9	15.4	18.8	15.0	12.3	8.4
TOTAL	7.2	20.2	15.1	18.5	15.0	14.3	9.7

An interesting feature of the wage data was the small proportion of registrants paid the B.C. youth minimum wage which was $2.10 at the time of the survey. This wage rate was indicated by only 48 low-wage earners, of whom just 35, or 0.4% of the sample, were under eighteen years of age. Virtually all were in general clerical, trade and service-type jobs. The only other empirical evidence concerning the job-creation effects of this measure derives from a study on the effects of the 1972 increase in the B.C. minimum wage rate. This found that 95% of jobs attributed to the youth minimum by surveyed firms were located in Trade and Service industries.[1]

The distribution of wage rates by occupation tended to vary in line with the proportion of each sex in that category - i.e. so-called "women's work" was usually paid less. About half of the registrants in

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1 F. A. Rhodes, A Study of the Impact of Minimum Wage Revisions on Selected Business Establishments in British Columbia, Research Branch, B.C. Ministry of Labour, October 1973, p. 36.

both Sales (49.3%) and Services (50.7%) had earned less than $3.00, well above the sample average of 42.5%. However, it was rather surprising that Clerical wage rates were not particularly low considering the very heavy concentration of women in this category; only 40.4% of Clerical registrants reported a wage of less than $3.00. The majority of job categories with a preponderance of men tended towards the upper end of the wage scale. Occupations with a sizeable proportion of low-wage registrants who had earned $3.50 or more included Machining (41.0%), Construction (37.8%), Forestry and Logging (35.5%), Transport Equipment Operation (30.3%), and Processing (30.1%), which compared with 24% for the sample as a whole.

In addition to actual wage frequency data, information was recorded on the "required" or desired rates of pay indicated on the Manpower registration cards. Although such information was available for only 75.3% of the sample, the results probably give a fairly reliable indication of the level of expectations within the low-wage group. From an economic perspective, the wage levels desired by most low-wage earners appeared to be quite moderate considering the general climate of inflation and large wage settlements over the survey period. In many cases, the asking wage was identical to, or only slightly above, the rate previously earned by the registrants.

As might have been anticipated, the expectations of male low-wage earners were somewhat higher than for female registrants (Table 18). In terms of age, it was notable that a larger proportion of the 19-and-under group (35.3%) required a wage of less than $3.00 than for other age brackets which averaged 26.7% overall.

This result tends to contradict the common assumption that many teenagers have inflated wage expectations. The greatest proportion of persons asking in excess of $4.00 was found in the prime working age group (25-34).

Table 18

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY SEX AND DESIRED HOURLY WAGE (%)

	$2.99 or less	$3.00 -3.99	$4.00 -4.99	$5.00 or more	
Male	18.7	48.9	23.5	8.9	100.0
Female	30.9	58.2	9.3	1.5	100.0
TOTAL	26.9	55.2	14.0	4.0	100.0

Both the actual and desired wage frequencies were fairly consistent across the surveyed Manpower Centres. Average male wages for the sample ranged from $3.02 to $3.23 at different offices, and average female rates from $2.94 to $3.15. Nelson, Kamloops and Prince George had the largest proportion of workers who had earned in excess of $3.50, while Victoria and Terrace were the only offices with an above-average number earning less than $2.75.

(d) Labour Force Status and Duration of Employment

Information on these two aspects of labour market behaviour among low-wage workers is an essential element in gauging the effectiveness of minimum wage policy and other related income security measures. For example, both the degree of labour force attachment and the duration of employment among low-wage workers would have to be considered in implementing any scheme of guaranteed annual income. It would be important to

determine the incidence of part-time and temporary work which would tend to reduce estimates of potential weekly or annual earnings for persons at or near the minimum wage. In addition, any evaluation of the possible negative effects of minimum wage increases would have to take these factors into account. Higher turnover rates in low-wage jobs may mean that individual losses of income will actually be marginal in many cases. In other words, much of the adverse effect of a higher minimum wage may take the form of somewhat longer periods of "frictional" unemployment, rather than long-term or permanent job losses.[1]

Survey results indicated a remarkably high degree of labour force attachment among B.C. low-wage registrants. Of the total sample, 87.5% indicated that they had worked, or wished to work, full-time and on a permanent basis. The remaining 12.5% comprised part-time and temporary workers, including a small number of students employed at summer jobs. The proportion of workers in these latter categories showed quite a wide spread among the surveyed Manpower Centres, with a range of 6.5% to 24%.

There was a somewhat larger proportion of female (14.5%) than male (8.4%) registrants in temporary or part-time work. The corresponding proportions for the group earning less than $2.75 were 15.1% and 11.3%. By comparison, 1975 Labour Force Survey results for B.C. indicated that 25.0% of women and only 5.8% of men were classified as part-time workers, with an overall total of 12.7%.[2] The Labour Force Survey classifies

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1 A. G. King, "Minimum Wages and The Secondary Labour Market", Southern Economic Journal, April 1975, pp. 26-28.

2 The Labour Force, Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 71-001.

as full-time persons working at least 30 hours per week, as well as persons working less than 30 hours who consider themselves to be full-time workers. This varies slightly from the survey definition where temporary workers were grouped with other part-time workers, although the total number of temporary workers in the sample was quite small.

Data on the length of each registrant's last job was calculated from the dates of employment recorded on the Canada Manpower registration form. To the extent that 2.3% of the low-wage sample were still employed at the time of the survey and because previous jobs included a number of summer, temporary and seasonal positions, this would tend to give a slight downward bias to the overall estimates of employment duration.

Analysis of the results by sex indicated that women tended to stay in their last jobs for longer periods than men. Over half of the female registrants had worked for more than six months, as compared to less than 40% for male registrants (Table 19). The degree of job stability was markedly lower among registrants who earned less than $2.75 per hour; only 40.6% of women and 32.9% of men in this category had been employed in excess of six months.

Table 19

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY SEX AND LENGTH OF LAST JOB (%)*

	3 months or less	4 - 6 months	7 - 12 months	over 12 months	
Male	32.8	29.0	17.8	20.4	100.0
Female	23.6	23.6	20.4	32.4	100.0
TOTAL	26.6	25.3	19.5	28.5	100.0

* Information on sex or duration of last job was not available for 2.2% of the sample.

The results show a rising proportion of persons in successively higher age brackets who had been employed for more than a year. Whereas only 13.6% of registrants under the age of 19 had worked more than twelve months, this proportion rose to 57.1% for the 55-64 bracket and to 70% for persons over 65 (Table 20). Exactly the opposite progression was evident for job-holding under three months in length. A considerable part of this divergence was probably attributable to the large proportion of young, single males who could be expected to display higher rates of turnover.

Table 20

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY AGE AND LENGTH OF LAST JOB(%)*

	3 Months Or Less	4 - 6 Months	7 - 12 Months	Over 12 Months	
19 & Under	42.2	27.9	16.3	13.6	100.0
20 - 24	27.2	28.8	21.3	22.6	100.0
25 - 34	21.2	26.1	22.2	30.5	100.0
35 - 44	19.4	19.3	18.6	42.6	100.0
45 - 54	16.0	18.0	17.6	48.3	100.0
55 - 64	14.4	13.9	14.6	57.1	100.0
65 & Over	8.6	8.6	12.9	70.0	100.0
TOTAL	26.6	25.3	19.5	28.5	100.0

* Information on age or duration of last job was not available for 2.2% of the sample.

A final important aspect of employment duration concerns marital status. The survey suggests that married low-wage earners tend to hold jobs longer than do single persons. Nearly two fifths of the married registrants had been employed for more than one year

as opposed to less than a fifth for single registrants (Table 21). Persons indicating their marital status as "other" showed only a slightly lesser degree of job attachment than married low-wage earners. Aside from the fact that these two groups have greater family responsibilities then single persons, another factor which likely affected the results was the large proportion of females among married registrants. For this reason, it was not surprising that although employment duration was lower for all marital status categories among registrants paid less then $2.75 per hour, the most notable drop was in the proportion of married persons who worked over a year which was only 31.8%.

Table 21

DISTRIBUTION OF B.C. LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY MARITAL STATUS AND LENGTH OF LAST JOB(%)*

	3 Months Or Less	4 - 6 Months	7 - 12 Months	Over 12 Months	
Single	33.5	28.8	18.0	19.7	100.0
Married	18.4	20.7	21.6	39.2	100.0
Other	21.3	23.6	20.4	34.7	100.0
TOTAL	26.7	25.3	19.6	28.4	100.0

* Information on marital status or length of last job was not available for 3.8% of the sample.

(e) Mobility

The results of the survey suggested a more significant degree of geographic mobility exists among low-wage earners then has traditionally been assumed. Of the total surveyed registrants, 12.8% had been employed out of province on their previous job. In-migration to the province was slightly more prevalent

among male (15.7%) than female (11.5%) registrants.

Age appeared to be an important factor in determining the propensity to move among low-wage earners. There was an especially pronounced disparity in the proportion of out-of-province workers in the 20-24 age group as compared to B.C. low-wage registrants of the same age (Table 22).

Table 22

DISTRIBUTION OF IN - AND OUT-OF-PROVINCE LOW-WAGE REGISTRANTS BY AGE(%)*

	19 & Under	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
In-Province	20.5	32.2	23.1	9.5	7.3	4.9	0.8
Out-of-Province	19.3	43.0	20.2	6.7	5.2	3.3	0.7
TOTAL	20.4	33.3	22.8	9.2	7.1	4.8	0.8

* Omits 1.6% of total registrants who did not indicate their age; as a result, totals may not add to 100%.

The industrial distribution of B.C. and out-of-province registrants was basically similar except in two respects. A larger proportion of the migrants had worked in manufacturing industries (16.4%) than in-province low-wage earners (9.1%), while this position was reversed for service activities (B.C., 45.5%; out-of-province, 37.7%). A majority of incoming registrants came from areas with generally lower unemployment than B.C. which may indicate that non-economic motives for moving were most important. The major sending areas were Alberta and Ontario which accounted for over two thirds of the inter-Provincial movement.[1]

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[1] Information on the specific location of registrant's last job was recorded only for the Kamloops, Nelson and Abbotsford Manpower Centres.

Intra-provincial mobility also appeared to be quite significant. Data from three Manpower Centres showed that almost a quarter of the low-wage registrants had worked in some other area of the province on their last job. Combined with the results on in-migration, the overall frequency of movement for the low-wage group at each of these Centres was as follows: Kamloops, 32.5%; Abbotsford, 37.6% and Nelson, 46.4%.

Summary and Conclusion

The survey of low-wage workers was undertaken by the Research and Planning Branch to provide detailed demographic and labour market information on a particular segment of the provincial work force. Information of this nature should be a useful aid in the formulation and evaluation of government policies such as minimum wages which directly affect this portion of the population. The study parallels similar surveys done in Alberta, Ontario and Quebec in recent years and, despite minor methodological differences, the B.C. results were similar to those found in these other jurisdictions.

Data was collected from a selected group of nine Canada Manpower Centres across the province, and provided information on roughly one quarter of the total registrants at the Centres surveyed. Because the sample was composed almost entirely of unemployed persons, the survey results may not be consistent with findings which might have been derived from a more comprehensive study of all low-wage workers in the province. It should also be noted that the data presents a picture of the low-wage labour market only at a given point in time, and does not provide information either on changing characteristics, or the degree of movement in or out of this group over an extended period. Despite these limitations, we believe that the basic profile of the sample is reflective of the total low-wage population in the province.

The survey found that a number of the characteristics of the low-wage sample differed significantly from the labour force as a whole. Over two-thirds of persons classified as low-wage earners were women, and over one-half

were under 25 years of age. The concentration of women and younger persons was found to be even greater when the under - $2.75 portion of the sample was examined separately. There was also a significant proportion of women in the middle age brackets (35-64). It was notable that the proportion of low-wage women was considerably higher outside the main urban areas of Vancouver and Victoria, a possible indication of the difficulties experienced by women in finding employment (especially higher paying) in smaller centres and rural areas.

The age distribution of the sample was reflected in the results on marital status and number of dependents. Slightly more than half of the low-wage registrants were single and over 80% stated they had no dependents. The extent of family responsibilities was somewhat higher among married persons. However, it was not possible to ascertain how many married registrants were "secondary" wage earners in their families, nor was there any indication of what other sources of income might be available to supplement their low wage levels.

Although a lack of formal education may have been a cause of low wages for some persons in the sample, it was found that over 80% of the sample had some high school education or better, and there was a significant proportion with university or other advanced education. The high proportion of younger low-paid workers may point to deficiencies in vocational or on-the-job training as important barriers in the transition from school to higher paying employment.

A further finding of the survey was that recent immigrants to the province do not appear to hold a disproportionate number of low-wage positions. It was found that male immigrants in the sample tended to have higher levels

of education than the B.C. labour force, while many immigrant women earning low wages had little formal education.

The occupational and industrial characteristics of the survey population showed a high degree of concentration, particularly in comparison with B.C. labour force. Two-thirds of the total sample and almost 80% of low-wage women had clerical, sales or service occupations. The industrial distribution indicated that two-thirds of the low-wage workers were found in the service and trade sectors of the economy, while manufacturing and primary industry were under-represented within the sample. The degree of industrial and occupational concentration was even more marked for workers earning less than $2.75/hour.

Wage frequency data from the survey indicated that over a quarter of the low-wage sample, or 6% of all registrants at the surveyed CMC's, earned the minimum wage or slightly above (up to $2.74). The modal, or most common, wage rate cited was $2.50, although the average wage was $3.12 for men and $3.01 for women. Contrary to widespread opinion, the level of wage expectations among low-wage earners, especially teenagers, did not appear excessive since the wage rate earned in their previous job was often a good indication of their asking wage. The survey also indicated that the youth minimum wage is not a very effective job-creation measure in view of insignificant proportion of teenagers who received this rate.

Results showed a high degree of labour force attachment among low-wage workers as a large majority were, or wished to be, full-time permanent job-holders. More women than men worked on a part-time or temporary basis.

Another factor which would affect the potential level of earnings available from low-paid work is duration of employment. Women tended to remain longer in low-wage jobs than men, and the highest rates of turnover were found among male teenagers. The duration of employment was also higher for married than single persons and for persons earning more than $2.74/hour compared to those earning less than this rate.

One final characteristic examined for the survey population was their degree of mobility. Roughly 13% of the low-wage registrants had worked outside the province on their last job. In addition, intra-provincial mobility was recorded for three Manpower Centres. Results showed that approximately 25% of last job employment for these Centres had been in other areas of B.C.

In concluding this survey, a number of omissions and limitations should be noted which were the result either of technical problems or a lack of sufficient data. One notable omission was the lack of information on the duration of unemployment for people who had previously or normally worked for low wages. Data limitations also precluded an accurate analysis of the reasons for leaving last employment. However, the general impression gained from carrying out the survey was that the bulk of job leaving was involuntary in nature (due to layoffs, etc.), contrary to the popular belief that low-wage workers simply do not have a high degree of attachment to the labour force. It may be suggested that often it is the instability of poorly-paid employment rather than of the individual low-wage worker which is the major source of turnover within this group. These and other omissions would require further research in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the characteristics and needs of low-wage workers in the province.

Appendix

DISTRIBUTION OF MALE UNEMPLOYED CMC CLIENTS BY AGE
AT QUARTERLY REFERENCE DATE NEAREST TO LOW-WAGE SURVEY(%)

Centre	Under 20	20-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Total	Number of Registrants
Victoria	13.9	30.3	36.6	17.0	2.2	100.0	4,676
Kamloops	20.0	24.3	40.8	10.4	4.4	99.9	1,403
Vancouver(Howe)[1]	11.9	28.0	46.1	12.8	1.1	99.9	7,410
New Westminster	20.1	31.9	34.2	11.9	1.9	100.0	4,029
Abbotsford[2]	15.4	23.4	39.0	20.8	1.4	100.0	1,214
Prince George[3]	13.4	25.9	44.3	14.7	1.7	100.0	2,700
Terrace/Kitimat	16.5	25.9	44.5	12.3	0.7	99.9	1,412
Nelson	14.0	24.8	45.2	15.2	0.8	100.0	990
TOTAL	14.9	28.2	41.2	14.1	1.7	100.0	23,834

1 Includes 2,309 students
2 Includes 343 Vanderhoof registrants
3 Excludes Smithers' registrants

DISTRIBUTION OF FEMALE UNEMPLOYED CMC CLIENTS BY AGE
AT QUARTERLY REFERENCE DATE NEAREST TO LOW-WAGE SURVEY(%)

Centre	Under 20	20-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Total	Number of Registrants
Victoria	9.2	29.5	39.6	21.0	.7	100.0	2,933
Kamloops	16.6	27.2	44.8	8.7	2.6	99.9	938
Vancouver(Howe)[1]	17.7	35.3	36.6	9.6	.8	100.0	4,675
New Westminster	19.2	27.9	36.3	15.9	.7	100.0	3,082
Abbotsford[2]	14.9	25.2	42.0	17.6	.3	100.0	754
Prince George[3]	16.1	26.5	46.7	10.4	.3	100.0	2,134
Terrace/Kitimat	17.5	24.8	45.0	12.2	.4	99.9	898
Nelson	15.1	27.8	45.7	11.2	.2	100.0	403
TOTAL	15.9	29.8	39.9	13.6	.8	100.0	15,817

1 Includes 2,100 students
2 Includes 224 Vanderhoof registrants
3 Excludes Smithers' registrants

Source: Report of Registered Clients and Vacancies, Canada Department of Manpower and Immigration, Man. 757.

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ACTIVE CMC CLIENT REGISTRATION AT CLOSEST REFERENCE DATE (s) TO LOW WAGE SURVEY

Male - Employed and Unemployed

	Victoria Aug 29-Sept 30	Kamloops Oct 31	Vancouver (Howe St) July 31	New Westminster Sept 30 Oct 31	Abbotsford Oct 30 Nov 30	Prince George[1] Oct 31	Terrace/Kitimat[2] Oct 31 Nov 30	Nelson Nov 30	TOTAL
Managerial	4.2	2.2	10.2	0.9	2.7	1.5	0.4	1.1	4.1
Natural Science	4.2	1.9	10.7	1.1	1.3	1.5	1.4	2.3	6.3
Social Science	1.7	1.1	5.4	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	1.1	2.0
Teaching	2.4	0.7	4.7	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.7	1.9
Medicine & Health	1.0	0.9	1.7	0.5	0.2	0.9	0.4	0.9	1.0
Artistic & Literary	1.7	0.4	2.4	0.8	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4	1.2
Sports & Recreation	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.1
Clerical	9.6	3.8	11.0	7.0	5.7	3.0	2.1	3.2	7.1
Sales	7.3	5.8	6.5	5.4	5.8	3.6	2.1	2.7	5.5
Service Occupations	22.6	8.1	9.4	6.5	5.6	6.6	2.9	3.9	10.0
Farming, Horticulture	1.9	3.7	0.9	0.6	1.9	0.3	0.3	0.7	1.2
Fishing & Trapping	0.2	0.0	0.?	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.2
Forestry	1.6	5.4	2.5	1.3	4.5	15.0	18.5	11.7	5.6
Mining	0.8	2.6	1.8	0.2	1.0	0.7	0.7	2.8	1.2
Processing	5.7	9.7	2.9	7.0	8.7	18.3	9.4	14.6	7.8
Machining	2.2	2.9	1.9	6.0	4.8	3.5	6.3	3.5	3.5
Product Fabricating Repair	7.0	7.0	4.6	12.2	6.9	5.8	7.0	4.9	7.1
Construction Trades	12.2	25.6	7.5	26.4	37.8	26.0	37.0	34.3	20.8
Transport Equipment Op.	11.0	8.7	4.1	9.5	9.0	9.2	7.2	6.4	8.0
Material Handling	1.0	2.0	2.4	11.8	1.5	2.1	1.8	2.0	3.6
Other Crafts & Equip. Opera.	1.5	0.7	0.9	1.3	0.5	0.7	0.4	1.0	1.0
Other Occupations	0.1	6.6	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.0	1.5	0.8
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.2	99.9	99.8	100.2	99.8	99.9	100.0
No. of Registrants	4,542	1,867	5,713	4,123	1,260	2,461	2,014	1,141	23,121

1. Excludes Vanderhoof registrants
2. Excludes Smithers registrants

SOURCE: Report of Registered Clients and Vacancies, Canada Dept. of Manpower & Immigration, Man 757

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ACTIVE CMC CLIENT REGISTRATION AT CLOSEST REFERENCE DATE (s) TO LOW WAGE SURVEY

Female - Employed and Unemployed

	Victoria Aug 29 - Sept 30	Kamloops Oct.31	Vancouver (Howe St) July 31	New Westminster Sept. 30 - Oct. 31	Abbotsford Oct.31- Nov. 30	Prince George[1] Oct.31	Terrace/[2] Kitimat Oct. 31- Nov.30	Nelson Nov.30	TOTAL
Managerial	1.1	1.1	3.2	0.2	0.6	0.7	0.7	0	1.2
Natural Science	1.4	1.0	4.9	0.1	0.5	0.8	0.1	1.4	1.6
Social Science	3.1	2.2	9.5	0.8	1.4	1.2	1.1	6.2	3.5
Teaching	5.4	3.0	9.1	2.0	0.9	2.3	2.0	3.4	4.3
Medicine & Health	7.2	6.4	9.0	5.6	4.9	4.6	5.3	5.4	6.5
Artistic & Literary	1.6	0.2	2.5	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.6	1.1
Sports & Recreation	0	0.2	0.3	0.2	0	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2
Clerical	47.8	42.3	35.6	48.0	39.9	41.3	37.7	33.7	42.2
Sales	9.0	10.2	5.5	10.2	12.1	11.9	9.3	9.6	9.3
Service Occupations	17.7	27.4	13.2	14.0	16.3	24.6	28.7	20.5	18.7
Farming, Horticulture,etc	0.6	1.2	0.5	1.3	4.0	0.2	0.2	1.2	0.9
Fishing & Trapping	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.9	0	0.1
Forestry Occupations	0.2	1.1	0.2	0	0	4.9	1.7	5.6	1.2
Mining Occupations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Processing	1.2	0.3	1.5	2.2	14.2	2.6	4.8	3.0	2.6
Machining	0.2	0.2	0	0.1	0	0	0.3	0	0.1
Product Fabric.& Repair	1.6	0.8	2.6	5.3	1.8	0.6	0.5	0.2	2.2
Construction Trades	0.2	0.9	0.2	0.7	1.1	1.7	5.3	4.8	1.2
Transportation Equip Oper.	0.4	0.7	0	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.0	0.4	0.6
Material Handling	0.5	0	1.5	7.5	0.5	0.4	0	0.2	2.0
Other Crafts & Equip.Oper.	0.2	0	0.6	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.3
Other Occupations	0.5	0.9	0	0.1	0	0	0.1	3.0	0.3
TOTAL	99.9	100.1	99.9	99.9	99.9	99.9	100.1	99.8	100.1
Number of Registrants	2,912	1,287	3,008	2,915	780	2,066	1,155	498	14,621

1. Excludes Vanderhoof registrants
2. Excludes Smithers registrants

SOURCE: Report of Registered Clients & Vacancies, Canada, Department of Manpower & Immigration, Man 757 (Various months)